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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3475
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 2911
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE 5472
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE 0364
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT IMMEDIATE 3139
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS IMMEDIATE 8819
RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA IMMEDIATE 1605
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0507
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C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 000729

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KPKO](#) [UNUS](#) [MO](#) [AG](#)
SUBJECT: SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION ON WESTERN SAHARA

REF: A. 05 RABAT 2120

[1](#)B. USUN NEW YORK 794
[1](#)C. RABAT 772

Classified By: Amb. Thomas T. Riley for reasons 1.4 B and D

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Morocco is engaging in a disingenuous process to delay movement toward a negotiated settlement of the Western Sahara conflict. Its domestic consultations on autonomy for the Western Sahara cannot be taken seriously, and have thus far excluded those who might offer differing points of view. The Palace currently has sufficient political party support to move ahead with an autonomy proposal, but Morocco views perpetuating the status quo as working in its favor. Quiet discussions between Morocco and the Polisario as suggested by Ambassador Bolton, with Algeria sitting in, are a good idea in that they could help to create a sense of inevitability about autonomy and lead to negotiations. If they go ahead, we should keep the French closely apprised, and consider starting joint demarches with the French in Rabat and Algiers. Embassy concurs that a MINURSO renewal should be limited to 90 days. During this 90 day period Morocco should also be required to advance progress on an autonomy plan and discussions with the Polisario. This time should be used to examine ways to transfer responsibility for preventing conflict directly to Morocco and Algeria, and identify ways to more effectively address the equally serious threats related to illicit trafficking and terrorism in the Western Sahara and Pan-Sahel. End summary.

Consultations not serious

[1](#)2. (C) Embassy's view of current Moroccan actions is similar to that conveyed by USUN in ref (B). Morocco has begun what can only

be viewed
as another slow roll on the Western Sahara, sharing not an
autonomy plan
but a plan for protracted domestic consultation to justify
more time from
the Security Council and avoid direct action that could lead
to a settlement
of the conflict. While there is a kernel of truth in
Moroccan emphasis
on building a national consensus through a broad
consultative process,
this argument appears intended primarily to appeal to U.S.
and other
international sensibilities. In reality, the King and
government
currently have broad support from the political parties to
move forward
with an autonomy proposal. This has been borne out in recent
weeks in
comments from political parties across the spectrum during
the
Ambassador's series of consultations with party leaders, who
also
appear to recognize that resolving the conflict will require
risk
and sacrifice.

13. (C) The Embassy's view is that the consultative
process
currently being managed on behalf of the King by the Royal
Consultative
Council on Sahrawi Affairs (CORCAS) cannot be taken
seriously. The
council's members are hand-picked by the Palace and have
convened in
Rabat, not Laayoune. Those who might offer differing points
of view
have thus far been shut out, despite Minister-Delegate for
Foreign
Affairs Taieb Fassi Fihri's assurances to the Ambassador (ref
c)
that debate on the way forward would be serious and credible.

Why the delay?

14. (C) Why has Morocco elected again to delay? Likely
factors are:
(a) Morocco continues to see its success in outliving the
Baker plan
and maintaining its de facto control over the territory as
working in
its favor; (b) Morocco does not believe that a satisfactory
settlement
will be possible while Bouteflika is in power in Algeria;
and/or (c)
the Palace fears that one or more political parties may try
to oppose
autonomy and use it as a platform to break away from the
others in the
2007 parliamentary elections. (Fassi Fihri suggested as much
to the
Ambassador, and though his concern appears to us to be
overstated, it
probably enters into the mix and may have been a key factor
in Morocco's
apparent last minute decision to pull back from sharing an
autonomy plan
with the U.S. during Fassi Fihri's recent visit to
Washington.) The only
factors motivating Morocco toward a solution are its desire
for international
recognition of its sovereignty over the Western Sahara, and
international
criticism of its human rights abuses in the territory.

Quiet discussion could help

15. (C) One issue on which Morocco is probably right is the need to create within the region a sense of inevitability about autonomy as the eventual outcome as a means to induce the Polisario to negotiate on a serious proposal. The possible willingness of both Morocco and the Polisario to have a conversation somewhere out of the limelight is also an important sign. Facilitating a quiet dialogue between Morocco and the Polisario as Ambassador Bolton suggests, with Algeria sitting in, would be a constructive U.S. role at this stage, in that it could lead to an agreement for direct negotiations. Algeria should be invited -- if they attend it could be useful, if not, they will show their hand at really wanting to help. We should anticipate that any initial exchanges will be about differences and past injuries rather than shaping the future, but such exchanges could nevertheless serve as the first step along the road to real negotiations. At the same time, a 90-day versus six-month MINURSO renewal would be a clear signal to Morocco that Security Council patience with delay is not unlimited, and that the Security Council does not acquiesce to an increasingly ambiguous Moroccan timetable.

Work with the French

16. (C) In addition to a 90-day MINURSO renewal and quiet direct dialogue between the parties, we should consider working more closely with the French. Discussions with the French Embassy here suggest that the French see little substantive difference with the U.S. on the Western Sahara, and view this conflict as an area with the potential for close U.S.-French cooperation. U.S. efforts to facilitate the release of Moroccan prisoners of war last August caught the French by surprise, and raised concern in Paris that the U.S. might strike out on its own on this issue. A new sense and appearance of common purpose concerning the Western Sahara between Morocco's two most important international partners would send a strong message, short circuit Morocco's efforts to play Security Council members off one another, and increase pressure for progress on Morocco and Algeria. Cooperation should include keeping the French well briefed on conversations between Morocco and the Polisario if they occur (although their actual presence in the room might scare away the Polisario). It could also mean joint demarches by the French and U.S. Ambassadors in Rabat and Algiers to encourage a serious autonomy proposal and negotiations. Apart from a potentially constructive French role, there is no helpful EU consensus on the issue; other EU members are divided across a spectrum ranging from those focused

strongly on human
rights issues (the Nordics) to those concerned with
preserving their own
complicated territorial interests (Spain).

Focus security responsibility on Morocco and Algeria

17. (C) A second factor that should be considered in
conjunction with
MINURSO renewal is an assessment of ways in which greater
responsibility
for security could be transferred from MINURSO directly to
Morocco and
Algeria. These two countries have primary responsibility for
preventing
renewed armed conflict, and the Security Council should look
at ways in
which they could shoulder that responsibility directly. In
addition,
countering trafficking of all kinds and denying safe haven to
terrorists
in the Pan Sahel region are two security concerns related to
the Western
Sahara that are as significant as the possibility of a
renewed military
conflict between Moroccan forces and the Polisario.
Cooperation between
Morocco and Algeria on addressing these threats is virtually
nonexistent,
creating a vacuum that allows illicit activity to continue
which MINURSO
has no mandate to confront.

Visit Embassy Rabat's Classified Website;
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/rabat>

Riley